DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 446 SP 035 840

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TITLE Effects of Teachers' Leadership on Their Teaching Practices.
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the University Council of Educational Administration (Philadelphia, PA, October 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Practices; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Instructional Development; *Leadership; Leadership Training; *Participative Decision Making; *School Based Management; *Teacher Participation; *Teacher Role; Time Management

ABSTRACT

This study explored the extent to which teachers' participation in leadership and decision making affects their teaching practices, particularly their planning and delivering of instruction. The study involved an open-ended survey of 25 teacher leaders in a school district in central Texas, which was a school-based management site that had incorporated a Peer Assisted Leadership and Support component. Findings are presented according to the following themes: time frame of performance, need for leadership preparation, effect of teacher leadership on teaching practice, and satisfaction with dual roles. Findings reveal that teacher leaders perform their leadership duties at a variety of times in an effort to protect their classroom teaching and seem to use the time they normally spend in planning and conferencing, as well as their own personal time. While findings reveal that most teachers enjoy the challenge of performing two roles they also indicated that they periodically become overwhelmed with the responsibilities of both roles. The study concludes that teacher leadership might adversely affect some teaching practices, as planning and preparation for instruction are affected, and teacher leaders' sudden shifts from leading to teaching affects their teaching focus. (Contains 41 references.) (JDD)

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Effects of Teachers' Leadership on Their Teaching Practices

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Introduction

As teacher participation in shared decision making has expanded, teachers are asked to perform a variety of non-teaching duties within site-based managed schools. Thus, the re-organization of schools and the creation of a variety of formal site structures, "has created changes in roles among individuals within the school" (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993, p. 4). Similarly, Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth report that teachers are called to perform new tasks, "tasks that they have not been previously responsible for" (1992, p. 351). Consequently, many teachers face new demands associated with their performance.

Teacher participation in decision making increases teacher empowerment and advances professionalism. Additionally, teacher involvement in decision making "allows for greater control over the decision process" (Weiss, et al., 1992, p. 351). It is further assumed "that when teachers take leadership in matters of instruction and school organization, authentic change happens" (Miller, L. & O'Shea, C., 1992, p. 197). On the other hand, some assert that teacher participation has created tension between teachers and administrators in understanding their respective roles (Lieberman, 1988, Clune & White, 1988), and that teacher participation in decision making and leadership requires that they engage in areas with which they are not familiar. Thus, "teachers undertake a variety of tasks that they have not been responsible for. It makes very heavy demands on their time" (Weiss et al., 1992, p. 351). It is further suggested that:

> some elements in teacher participation systems even detract from student learning, such as the time and energy diverted from the classroom to the decision making councils. When teachers spend their time in committees deliberating, arguing, compromising, and voting, whether the experience

> is frustrating or satisfying, teaching comes to be a less significant part of teachers' daily work. (Weiss et al., 1992, p. 365)

Consequently, what needs to be determined is how teachers' involvement in leadership roles and decision making is affecting their practice of teaching. As Ovando suggests, "it is critical that the instructional effects of teachers' participation in decision making be documented in order to reduce some of the risks associated with shared leadership and teacher-leader dual responsibilities and status" (1994, p. 327). Furthermore, as Wohlestetter and Odden (1992) remind us

> Future policy and research ought to expand its preview of school-based management to include more than just delegating budget, personnel, and curriculum decisions to schools and to join school-based management as a governance reform with content (curriculum and instruction) reforms so as to enhance the possibilities for improving educational practice. (p. 529)

This paper presents the results of an exploratory study conducted in a school based management site which had incorporated a Peer Assisted Leadership and Support component . The purpose of the study was to explore to what extent teachers' participation in leadership and decision making affects their teaching practices; particularly their planning and delivering of instruction.

Theoretical Overview

Teacher leadership has been an emerging topic in the literature associated with the movement to restructure schools. While "restructuring may have different meaning for different people, and perception of it may depend on the

place/level of an individual within the school structure" (Ovando, 1994, p. 313), shared decision making which calls for teacher participation in leadership roles and tasks seems to be one of the current strategies widely used to improve teaching and learning.

Proponents and advocates of teacher participation in leadership roles and particularly in site-level decision making claim that teachers are in a unique position to make significant contributions to decision making about teaching and learning. For instance, according to Weiss, et al., some claims suggest "that teachers have important information, that participation advances professionalism, that when teachers share in decision making, they become committed to the decision and they feel a sense of ownership. . ." (1992, p. 350).

In an effort to foster teacher participation in decision making and leadership roles, schools have adopted several different structures when they follow a site-based management paradigm (Ovando, 1994). Likewise, teacher participation may fall within several decisional domains or areas. White (1992) reports that teachers are involved in decisions related to school budget, curriculum, and school staffing. Furthermore, English (1988) suggests that other areas of decision making include development of educational priorities, new programs, scheduling, professional development programs, and allocation of building resources. Most of these domains share a common purpose of meeting students' needs and campus specific priorities.

While there are a variety of areas in which teachers may be involved as decision makers or leaders, it appears that their participation may be influenced by several factors. According to Smylie (1992), teachers' willingness to participate in school decision making is influenced primarily by their

relationship with their principal. Thus, they are more willing to participate in all areas of decision making if they perceive their relationships with their principals as more open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive. Similarly, teachers' perceptions associated with the topics they address on shared decision making committees may influence their willingness to participate. Malen, et al. reported that teachers describe the issues they deal with on the councils as "routine, blasé, trivial, and peripheral. Furthermore, even with those issues that are more tangible, teachers describe their involvement as 'listening,' 'advising,' 'endorsing decisions others have made,' and taking 'rubber stamp' or 'token action'" (1990, p. 305).

As a result of teachers' participation in shared decision making in several domains, the role of these teachers has expanded. Thus, it is reported that "teacher involvement, roles and responsibilities seem to go beyond the traditional classroom teaching duties" (Ovando, 1994, p. 322). The literature suggests that among the diverse roles (decision maker, action researcher, staff developer, mentor, and others) that teachers may play in restructured schools, "teacher leadership has become a key element of recent initiatives to enhance the profession" (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 150).

Teacher leadership is not necessarily a new movement. Early research has shown that teachers have performed both formal and informal leadership roles in schools and classrooms (Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1975; Jackson, 1968; and Cuban, 1983). For example, teachers have been called upon to be department chairs, advisory committee leaders, and the like. However, according to Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers, "recent initiatives to develop teacher leadership represent often dramatic departures from these more traditional roles. They expand and

create substantially different work roles and responsibilities for teachers. They place teachers with administrators at the center of school and district level decision making" (1992, p. 151).

Apparently, the teacher leadership movement does have some advantages. Early evidence suggests that teachers' sense of expertise is increased (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Others suggest that teachers' leadership reduces their frustration; it leads to higher morale, a greater sense of professionalism, and an increase in teacher responsibility (David, 1988, 1989; Sickler, 1988; Carnoy & McDownell, 1989). It is further argued that:

> teachers assume new status, and new, more proactive posture in management and decision making. It creates potential for teacher leaders to challenge and reshape traditional prerogatives of principals, expands the foci of teacher leaders' role and responsibilities beyond the classroom, and creates potential for conflict in priority and effort between the work that teacher leaders perform in the classroom with children and the work that they perform outside the classroom with principals and other teachers. (Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 154)

While the existing literature supports to some extent the advantages associated with teacher leadership, it seems equally important to focus our attention on the effects of the changes on teacher roles as a result of restructuring initiatives. It has been acknowledged that effective change gives attention to both the psychological and symbolic sides of individuals affected by a change in roles and structures. In reviewing individual teacher concerns associated with how change affects them, W. J. Reddin (1970) identified three broad categories; individual (personal), relationship with others, and individual's work.

Consequently the following areas related to teacher leadersip effects are worth exploring: Individual effects: advancement, salary, future, view of self, formal authority, informal influence, view of prior values, and status; 2) Relationship effects: relationships with colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and family; 3) Work effects: amount of work, interest, importance, challenge, pressure, demands, physical surroundings, and hours of work.

Supporting to some extent the idea that changes in structure and roles can affect teachers as individuals, Chapman (1988) reports that participation in decision making had the following effects on teachers: greater personal and political efficacy, professional growth, confidence and trust in the organization and its administration, and curriculum development and teacher practice. However, Wagstaff and Reyes conclude "that teachers have strong feelings that site-based management expands their work load without concomitant compensation" (1993, p. 46).

Similarly, studies addressing the effects associated with teachers' relationships with others within restructuring initiatives suggest that the evolving relationships of teacher leaders with other teachers as well as with the school leader (principal) are affected. For instance, Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth report that "teachers have to engage other adults, negotiate, resolve differences, and come to decisions. Furthermore, they have to do this in unfamiliar territory, that is, in relation to tasks that are not teachers' usual business, tasks that they have to learn, tasks that ask them to extend themselves into new arenas of expertise" (1992, p. 351).

Research suggests that teacher leadership and participation in decision making affects teachers' relationships. As Lieberman (1988) and Rallis (1990)

remind us, how working relationships develop between teacher leaders and their colleagues and principals is key to the efficacy of these new and emerging leadership roles. For instance, Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth suggest that teachers who participate in shared decision making are yet faced with an additional demand related to "the necessity to participate face-to-face with their colleagues and confront them on issues of moment for themselves and the school. (1992, p. 351). Sprinkles' (1993) case study of a school engaged in implementing a new curriculum reported numeroues conflicts among sub-groups of teachers within the school.

Furthermore, the new relationships with teachers may create some conflicts. Among these, Weiss, et al. found that although "not universal," the new teachers' relationships may result in conflict between teachers who get involved and those who do not; among those teachers who actively engage in the decision making process; and also among teachers themselves as they face the need to abandon old ideas and embrace new ideas. Additional conflict can also emerge between those leading in staff development or community relations, and those in formal decision-making. This in turn may create confusion about the true benefits and authority of teachers who decide to undertake new roles. Thus, clarification, delineation, and communication of responsibilities need to be defined (Mutchler & Duttweiler, 1990), not only because teachers will continue to engage in new types of relationships, but also because relationships between teacher leaders and other teachers are the most important (Little, 1990; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wasley, 1989).

On the other hand, some suggest that "it is the relationship between teacher leaders and their principals that may be most crucial, especially in the

early stages of leadership and development" (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 151), since the role of the principal has been recognized as a key role in innovative initiatives. According to Little (1988) and Rallis (1990), for instance, the new teacher leadership roles depend, to a certain extent, on teacher-principal interaction and collaboration.

In addressing the implications for teacher leader-principal new working relationships, it is relevant to remember that "teacher leadership may bring principals and teachers who assume leadership roles into 'collaborative play' for the first time" (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 153). Consequently, while teacher leadership expands work roles, it may also provide teachers with new status and opportunities to challenge traditional leadership roles, thus creating conditions for potential conflict. According to Hargreaves (1990) such expansions may conflict with teachers' classroom-oriented, student-centered conception of work.

Studies focusing on the new working relationships between teacher leaders and principals suggest that these evolving relationships depend on the context of the schools in which they occur (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Blank, 1987; Manasse, 1985; Peterson, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). Other evidence indicates that these relationships are not developed in historical, social, or normative isolation (Deal, 1985; Deal & Peterson, 1990; Rossman, Corbertt & Firestone, 1988). Consequently, it seems reasonable to affirm that the new working relationships of teacher leaders and principals are affected by several factors associated with the context, traditions, individual values and beliefs, culture, and educational purpose of a school. More specifically, Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1990) report that factors such as ambiguities and uncertainties, interests and

prerogatives, expectations for teacher leadership, interpersonal obligations, strategic orientation, and key events, among others, may influence the development of these emerging relationships.

It is equally important to acknowledge that new working relationships do not happen immediately. Research has shown "that development of new working relationships between leaders and principals may involve a progression from an inward focus on self-interest and the interpersonal dimensions of the relationship, itself to symbiosis and a focus on tasks" (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 180).

The above discussion suggests that there has been important progress towards an understanding of the implications and effects of teacher leadership. Previous studies have focused on the effects of teacher leadership on individual teachers and on their working relationships with others (teachers, principals); however, research of the effects on their "individual work" (teaching practice) has been neglected and needs to be undertaken.

The Study

If "the net effect of teacher empowerment will be improved student performance, on whatever measure one chooses to use" (Weiss et al., 1992, p. 365), then knowledge of the effects of teachers' leadership on their teaching practices will lead us to an enhanced understanding, about teacher leadership. This knowldege will also highlight the "restraints and annoyances that divert them from the best teaching of which they are capable" (1992, p. 365). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the effect of teachers' leadership on their teaching practice. Teaching practice refers to instruction related tasks typically

performed by the teacher. These may include but are not limited to planning and delivering instruction, testing, grading, tutoring, conferencing, and so forth.

Procedures

This exploratory study followed a qualitative approach in order to "accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives, as well as philosophical perspectives on the nature of research, itself" (Merriam, 1988, p. 2). Furthermore, the strength of the case study design is its flexibility in the sample selection (Yin, 1989). Thus, the data for this study were gathered from teacher leaders in a single school district located in central Texas. This school district was selected because of its reputation in successfuly implementing a Peer Assisted Leadership and Support component, in addition to following a site-based management structure for at least three years.

Participants. The sample for this study was selected following criterion-based sampling (Merriam, 1988). Units of investigation are selected according to a set of predetermined criteria, and samples are located using these criteria (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990). Thus, the sample included teachers who had leadership responsibilities at different levels of school. A total of 25 teacher leaders were selected in order to represented a range of teacher leadership positions. Most of these teacher leaders were members of the district's Peer Assisted Leadership and Support program. While the leadership positions were diverse, all teachers had a "teacher leader" role. Table 1 shows the frequency of the self-reported leadership categories of study participants.

Table 1

Distribution of Study Participants by Leadership Position

Position	Number	Percent
Traditional		
Chairperson	8	32.0
Coordinator	4	16.00
New		
Lead Teacher	5	20.0
Academic Team Leader	6	24.0
Campus Leadership Team Leader	2	8.0

Procedures. Data for this study came from written responses of participants to five open-ended questions. These questions were asked in order to understand teacher leaders perspectives associated with their leadership roles (Patton, 1990), and to "enable the researcher to understand and capture points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior categories" (1990, p. 24). The following questiosn guided this study:

1. When do teacher leaders perform their leadership responsibilities?
2. What training opportunities are provided to teacher leaders?
3. To what extent does teacher leaders leadership performance affect their teaching practice?
4. To what extent are teacher leaders satisfied with their dual roles?

The researcher performed a content analysis of the participating teacher leaders' written responses (Krippendorff, 1980). Participants responses were analyzed and synthesized and a coding system was developed to organize the data (Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K., 1982).

Results

Given the purpose and nature of this study, an attempt was made to understand respondents' perspectives related to teacher leadership and "to capture their points of view without predetermining those points of view" (Patton, 1990, p. 24). Thus, the frequency of responses were not recorded. Responses were anlyzed and summarized in order to discern teacher leaders perceptions and concerns associated with the effects of their leadership duties. Findings are presented according to the following themes: time frame of performance, need for leadership preparation, effect of teacher leadership on teaching practice, and satisfaction with dual roles.

Time Frame of Teacher Leadership Performance

It was clear from the data base that time is a critical factor for teacher leadership performance. Respondents related that they performed their leadership duties at different times. Thus, they mostly performed their leadership tasks during planning periods, regular conference periods, lunch periods, professional days, release time, and before and after school. These teacher leaders affirmed that they used the time they would normally spend in planning and preparing for instruction to fulfill their leadership responsibilities.

It appears that these teacher leaders tried to minimize the amount of time lost with students and to protect their calssroom instruction duties. This is reflected in the following teacher leader comment: "I use my planning time during the day as much as possible. I sometimes work on schedules and memos at home in the evenings. Grade level meetings ar› during planning times. Chairman meetings (school wide) are after school (usually until after hours)."

Need for Leadership preparation

According to the respondents of this study, opportunities for professional development in general are available. However, respondents indicated that training was not directly related to their leadership roles. Similarly, when training was available, it did not include a follow-on component or stage . As a respondent commented, "I feel that I've had quality experiences in getting started. The training out of the block was great, but there has been no follow up instruction. What was sufficient is not sufficient now."

Teacher Leadership Effect on Teaching Practice

Apparently, there are mixed perceptions about the effect teacher leadership is having on teachers' teaching practices. According to some teacher leaders, performing leadership duties does not affect their teaching; instead, it is beneficial. As a teacher leader affirmed, "I do not allow them [leadership duties] to interfere because I usually have the luxury of selecting the time and place of inservice. Usually, the inservice is beneficial to my teaching because of the insights I gain from participants which spawn new teaching ideas."

Others feel that there is an extra demand on their time and focus. This sentiment is evident in the following responses:

- "They [leadership duties] demand some extra time and probably make you a better teacher because of the learning experiences and responsibility roles."
- "There are times that it takes away from my teaching focus - but I enjoy the other responsibilities."

Additionally, these teacher leaders are concerned with the difficulty associated with two roles. It seems like it takes two different frames of mind to complete different tasks involved in both jobs, and that it is often difficult to switch mind frames quickly enough to be effective in the classroom. As a teacher leader indicated, "I have less time to plan for my teaching responsibilities. Therefore, I have to do most of my planning after working hours - either late in the afternoon or at home. I feel that I have the responsibilities of two jobs and that I do not have time to efficiently do either."

Teacher Leaders Satisfaction with Dual Roles

Most teacher leaders responded that they enjoy the challenge of performing two roles, but at times they seem to be skeptical and feel frustrated by the lack of time and the need for balance between the two roles. They also indicated that, periodically, they become overwhelmed with the responsibilities of both roles, and that at these times, they really do not enjoy their additionall leadership roles.

The following comments illustrate these mixed perceptions:

- "I am enthusiastic about my position and find it always challenging and exciting. I like what I do."
- "I like doing both jobs, but it is very frustrating to attempt to balance them and also have a personal life."
- "I enjoyed every role in which I've had additional responsibilities."
- "It is rewarding to see new teachers grow professionally. I wished I had more time to offer."
- "A prophet is seldom accepted in his own country."

Conlusion

This study sought to explore and explain the effect or influence of teachers' leadership on teachers teaching practices. Teaching practices referred to instruction related tasks typically performed by the teacher, such as planning and delivering instruction, conferencing, grading, tutoring, , etc. Data were gathered from teacher leaders' written responses to questions related to teacher leadership positions, training for teacher leadership, time frame of performance of leadership duties, effects on teaching practices, and satisfaction with dual roles (teacher and leader).

Findings of this study reveal that there are a variety of teacher leader positions. Some examples are: Grade Level Chairperson, Coordinator, Lead Teacher, Academic Team Leader, And Campus Leadership Team Leader. Apparently, this diversity is related to the particular characteristics of site structures that schools are adopting. As Reyes and Wagstaff concluded, the different interpretations of the meaning of site-based management have

originated the development and use of "distinct models or patterns of site-based decision making" (1993, p. 1).

Teacher leaders are afforded general training opportunities for the purpose of professional enhancement. These findings are congruent with the recognition of staff development as a "major strategy for the purpose of maintaining the quality of the instructional program" (Ovando, 1994, p. 325). However, findings also reveal that further preparation of teacher leaders needs to address leadership related topics and to include a follow-on component so that continuity is assured and, more importantly, teachers are provided with assistance and support as they apply leadership knowledge and skills.

A major concern of the study's participants relates to the time frame of teacher leadership performance. Findings reveal that teacher leaders perform their leadership duties at a variety of times in an effort to protect their classroom teaching. They seem to use the time they normally spend in planning and conferencing, as well as their own time (lunch time, release time, and home time).

Results also suggest that there are mixed perceptions about the effect of teacher leadership on teaching practices. Performing two roles appears to create some conflict for teacher leaders. Thus, switching mind frames and focus quickly enough to be effective in the classroom becomes a difficulty for these teacher leaders. While the findings of this study support the idea of teachers' satisfaction and enthusiasm related to the challenges of teacher leadership, some frustration and skepticism are also apparent. This concern is evident when teacher leaders have to balance their leadership and teaching roles in their effort to protect the

time they spend with students in the classroom and to perform both jobs efficiently.

While this study was limited teacher leaders in a single school district and data was gathered from written responses to open-ended questions , it may be concluded that teacher leadership might adversely affect some teaching practices. Planning and preparation for instruction are greatly affected. This in turn may have a detrimental impact on classroom instruction. Similarly, teacher leaders' teaching focus is affected since they have to suddenly move from leading to teaching. Time for direct instruction is protected; however, time for preparing, conferencing, and personal use seems to be affected. Teacher leaders extend their work beyond their working hours, which in turn may influence their personal lives. Consequently, it may be asserted that changes in teachers roles afffect individual teachers work load, interest, percpetions of importance, challenge, pressure, demands and hours of work.

The findings and conclusions of this exploratory study support the need of a more in depth look and analysis of teacher leadership effects. As Hart suggests, "the effects of change remain a central concern in school reform research" (1994, p. 472). Thus, researchers and school leaders must engage in further inquiry endeavors to better understand the challenges and true benefits associated with teacher leadership and the new demands placed on teacher leaders. Additional insights of teacher leadership impact may also generate knowledge that can assist schools leaders in their search for more effective ways of enhancing teaching and learning.

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